TOWN OF BEDFORD
WESTCHESTER COUNTY, NY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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Commissioner of Public Works

# Town of Bedford Consolidated Water District Public Notice

# Lead in Drinking Water – November 2019

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER

The Bedford Consolidated Water District found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes/buildings. Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Please read this information closely to see what you can do to reduce lead in your drinking water.

## INTRODUCTION

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Bedford Consolidated Water District are concerned about lead in your drinking water. Although most homes have very low levels of lead in their drinking water, some homes in the community have lead levels above the EPA action level of 15 parts per billion (ppb), or 0.015 milligrams of lead per liter of water (mg/L). Under Federal law we are required to have a program in place to minimize lead in your drinking water. This program includes corrosion control treatment and public education.
If you have any questions about how we are carrying out the requirements of the lead regulation please contact the Bedford DPW Water Division at 914-666-7855. This notice explains the simple steps you can take to protect you and your family by reducing your exposure to lead in drinking water.

## HEALTH EFFECTS OF LEAD

Lead is a common metal found throughout the environment in lead-based paint, air, soil, household dust, food, certain types of pottery porcelain and pewter, and water. Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys, and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body. The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children. Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low levels of lead more than healthy adults. Lead is stored in the bones, and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development.
Amounts of lead that won't hurt adults can slow down normal mental and physical development of growing bodies. In addition, a child at play often comes into contact with sources of lead

contamination—like dirt and dust— that rarely affect an adult. It is important to wash children's hands and toys often, and to try to make sure they only put food in their mouths.

## LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

Lead in drinking water, although rarely the sole cause of lead poisoning, can significantly increase a person's total lead exposure, particularly the exposure of infants who drink baby formulas and concentrated juices that are mixed with water. The EPA estimates that drinking water can make up 20 percent or more of a person's total exposure to lead.

Lead is unusual among drinking water contaminants in that it seldom occurs naturally in water supplies like rivers and lakes. Lead enters drinking water primarily as a result of the corrosion, or wearing away, of materials containing lead in the water distribution system and household plumbing. These materials include lead-based solder used to join copper pipe, brass and chrome plated brass faucets, and in some cases, pipes made of lead that connect your house to the water main (service lines). **Bedford Consolidated Water District water is lead-free when it leaves our treatment plant. District distribution pipes, including service pipes, that carry the water to your community are made of iron and copper, and do not add lead to water.** In 1986, Congress banned the use of lead solder containing greater than 0.2% lead, and restricted the lead content of faucets, pipes and other plumbing materials to 8.0%.

When water stands in lead pipes or plumbing systems containing lead for several hours or more, the lead may dissolve into your drinking water. This means the first water drawn from the tap in the morning, or later in the afternoon after returning from work or school, can contain fairly high levels of lead.

## STEPS YOU CAN TAKE IN THE HOME TO REDUCE EXPOSURE TO LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

**A.** Despite our best efforts mentioned earlier to control water corrosivity, lead levels in some homes or buildings can be high. To find out whether you need to take action in your own home, have your drinking water tested to determine if it contains excessive concentrations of lead. Testing the water is essential because you cannot see, taste, or smell lead in drinking water. The Town will provide a test for lead at your home at no charge to you. For more information on having your water tested, please call Bedford DPW Water Division (914) 666-7855. If you would prefer to have your water tested independently, the following is a list of certified laboratories in your area that you can call to have your water tested for lead: Westchester County Environmental Lab at (914) 231-1620 and YML Environmental Inc. at (914) 245-3203.

**B.** If a water test shows that the drinking water drawn from a tap in your home contains lead above 15 parts per billion, then you should take the following precautions:

- Let the water run from the tap before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in a faucet has stood for more than six hours. The longer water resides in your home's plumbing the more lead it may contain. Flushing the tap means running the cold water faucet until the water gets noticeably colder, usually about 15 to 30 seconds. Although toilet flushing or showering flushes water through a portion of your home's plumbing system, you still need to flush the water in each faucet before using it for drinking or cooking. Flushing tap water is a simple and inexpensive measure you can take to protect your family's health. It usually uses less than one or two gallons of water and costs less than $0.30 per month. To conserve water,

you can fill a couple of bottles for drinking water after flushing the tap, and whenever possible use the first flush water to wash dishes, watering plants or other purposes that do not involve cooking and drinking. If you live in an apartment complex, letting the water flow before using it may not work to lessen your risk from lead. The plumbing systems have more, and sometimes larger pipes than smaller buildings. Ask your landlord for help in locating the source of lead and for advice on reducing the lead level.

- Do not cook with, drink water from, or make baby formula from the hot water tap. Hot water can dissolve lead more quickly than cold water. If you need hot water, draw water from the cold water tap and heat it on the stove.
- Remove loose lead solder and debris from the plumbing by removing the faucet strainers from all taps and running the water from 3 to 5 minutes. Thereafter, periodically remove the strainers and flush out any debris that has accumulated.
- If your copper pipes are joined with lead solder that has been installed illegally since it was banned in 1986, notify the plumber who did the work and request replacement of the lead solder with lead-free solder. Also, notify the Bedford Building Department at (914) 666-8040 about the violation. Lead solder looks dull gray, and when scratched with a metal object looks shiny.
- ***Replace your plumbing fixtures if they are found to contain lead.*** Plumbing materials, including pipes, new brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as "lead-free," may contribute lead to drinking water. The law currently allows end-use brass fixtures, such as faucets, with up to 8% lead to be labeled as "lead free." However, plumbing fixtures labeled National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) certified may only have up to 2 percent lead. Visit the National Sanitation Foundation Web site at: **www.nsf.org/Certified/Lead_content/** to learn more about lead-containing plumbing fixtures.
- Have an electrician check your wiring. If grounding wires from the electrical system are attached to your pipes, corrosion may be greater. Check with the electrician or your local electrical code to determine if your wiring can be grounded elsewhere. DO NOT attempt to change the wiring yourself because improper grounding can cause electrical shock and fire hazards.
- Please note that boiling water does not reduce lead levels.

**C**. The steps described above will reduce the lead concentrations in your drinking water. However, if a water test shows that the drinking water coming from your tap contains lead concentrations more than 15 parts per billion after flushing, then you may want to take the following additional measures:

- Purchase or lease a home water treatment device to remove lead. Home treatment devices are limited because each unit treats only the water that flows from the faucet to which it is connected, and all of the devices require periodic maintenance and replacement. Devices such as reverse osmosis systems or distillers can effectively remove lead from your drinking water. Some activated carbon filters may reduce lead levels at the tap, however, all lead reduction claims should be investigated. Be sure to check the actual performance of a specific home treatment device before and after installing the unit.
- Purchase bottled water for drinking and cooking.

## SHOULD YOUR CHILD BE TESTED FOR LEAD

New York Public Health Law requires primary health care providers to screen each child for blood lead levels at one and two years of age as part of routine well child care. In addition, at each routine well-child visit, or at least annually if a child has not had routine well-child visits, primary health care providers assess each child who is at least six-months of age, but under six years of age, for high lead exposure. Each child found to be at risk for high lead exposure is screened or referred for lead screening.

If your child has not had routine well-child visits (since the age of one year) and you are concerned about lead exposure to your child, contact your local health department or healthcare provider to find out how you can get your child tested for lead.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

As background, when the district switched to our new surface water supply from NYCDEP in 2013, our design engineers anticipated potential water corrosivity issues and included the use of food grade water treatment chemicals to reduce corrosion, including sodium hydroxide and orthophosphate. Our operators have been applying these chemicals at the recommended dosages as approved by the DOH, and in in July 2016 we switched to a different blend of phosphate in order to further reduce the corrosivity of the water to plumbing. This treatment has been effective until 2019. When we learned of the 2019 results, we re-examined our treatment system records, and confirmed that proper chemical dosages were used. We will continue to reevaluate and optimize our corrosion control treatment. In addition, we will increase the frequency of sampling to every 6 months so we can closely monitor the lead levels in our water system. Our next round of sampling will occur between January and June 2020 and will include additional lead and copper monitoring sites as well as additional water quality parameter monitoring sites.

**D**. You can consult a variety of sources for additional information. Your family doctor or pediatrician can perform a blood test for lead and provide you with information about the health effects of lead. State and local government agencies that can be contacted include:

- The Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000 can provide you with information about your community's water supply, a list of local certified laboratories, plus information about the health effects of lead and how to have your child's blood tested for lead.
- The Bedford Building Department (914) 666-8040 can provide you with information about building permit records that should contain the names of plumbing contractors that plumbed your home.
- For more information call us at 914-666-7855. For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home/building and the health effects of lead, visit EPA's website at http://www.epa.gov/lead or contact your health care provider.